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Message Text

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ACTION AGR-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 OMB-01

IO-11 AID-05 COME-00 AF-06 EB-07 /097 W
---------- 029617
R 101414Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3786
INFO AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
CONGEN CAPE TOWN 7174
CONGEN DURBAN 3628
CONGEN JOHANNESBURG 5433

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 PRETORIA 00604J

PASS AGRI FAS G& F DIV.

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

ATTENTION: KAY O. PATTERSON, EDITOR FOREIGN AGRICULTURE MAGAZINE

SUBJECT: RAIN, FLOOD AND CYCLONE DAMAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

FROM AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE, PRETORIA

1. WIDESPREAD STORMS AND FLOODS RAVISHING VAST AREAS OF TRANSVAAL, NATAL, ORANGE FREE STATE PROVINCES IN THE PAST THREE WEEKS LEFT BEHIND A TRAIL OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE FLOODS HAVE CAUSED AT LEAST 31 DEATHS AND DAMAGES ARE RUNNING INTO MILLIONS OF RANDS TO PROPERTIES, CROPS AND DAMS.

3. RAINS WHICH STARTED IN NATAL AND WESTERN TRANS-VAAL EARLY IN DECEMBER WERE FIRST A BLESSING TO THE FARMERS AFTER THE MANY DRY MONTHS OF THE WINTER.
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FARMERS WERE EAGER TO PLANT CORN AND GRAIN SORGHUM

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AND OTHER CROPS. THERE WAS NOT MUCH PANIC IN THE FARMING AREAS UNTIL RAINS BEGAN TO CONTINUE WITHOUT INTERUPTION IN SOME AREAS FOR AS LONG AS TWO OR THREE WEEKS AT A TIME.

4. HEAVY RAINS AND ELECTRICAL STORMS SWEPT THROUGH THE LEVEL PLAINS AND GOOD CORN GROWING AREAS OF SOUTHWESTERN TRANSVAAL CAUSING DAMS AND RIVERS TO OVERFLOW AND CORN FIELDS TO DISAPPEAR.

THE WORST HIT CORN GROWING AREA IS LOCATED SOUTH-WEST OF LICHTENBURG TOWARD DELAREYVILLE, SCHWEIZER-RENECKE FURTHER TOWARDS BLOEMHOF ALONG THE VAAL RIVER TOWARDS HOOPSTAD, NORTH TOWARDS WOLMANSSTAD, ROSTRATAVILLE, KLEINS-HARTS AND GERDAU. REPORTS FROM OTHER AREAS, CORN AND GRAIN AND SORGHUM GROWING REGIONS INCLUDING BOTHAVILLE REPORT: STANDING WATER IN CORN FIELDS WITH LITTLE CHANCE OF DRAINAGE SINCE RAINS STILL CONTINUE.

5. PARTS OF NATAL AND THE ORANGE FREE STATE, WHILE ALSO SWEPT BY STORMS CAUSED BY CYCLONE DANAE, HAVE REPORTEDLY SUFFERED LITTLE CROP DAMAGE DUE TO THE HILLY TOPOGRAPHY AND GOOD DRAINAGE OF THE FIELDS.

SHORTLY AFTER THE RAINS, THE EXCESS WATERS SUB-SIDED. HOWEVER, SOME LOW LYING AREAS REPORTED FLOODS. RIVER SWELLINGS AND WASHED OUT DAMS. THE TOWN OF LADY-SMITH WAS THUS AFFECTED WHEN THE KLIP RIVER LEFT THE BANKS INUNDATING MANY PARTS OF THE TOWN.

6. SIMILARLY, THE RIVERS UMFOLOZI, PONGOLA, MAPUTO AND TUGELA IN ZULULAND FLOODED HEAVILY AFTER CYCLONE DANAE.

7. TWO SMALLER DAMS IN THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK REPORTEDLY WERE WASHED AWAY WHEN LOCAL STREAMS SWELLED HEAVILY LEAVING THEIR BANKS. IN THE EASTERN TRANSVAAL THE ROAD BETWEEN GRASKOP AND THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK HAS BEEN CLOSED AFTER A LANDSLIDE AT KOWYN'S PASS.
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THE VERWOERD DAM IS 107 PERCENT FULL ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS AND COULD BECOME A DANGER AREA IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. A CLOSE WATCH IS BEING KEPT ON THE ORANGE RIVER NEAR UPINGTON.

8. EVEN NORMALLY ARID AREAS OF THE KAROO WERE NOT SPARED THE FLOOD WATERS OF THE CYCLONE DANAE. NOR WERE THE AREAS OF NORTHERN CAPE AND SOUTHERN NATAL.

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BETWEEN MATJESFONTEIN AND LAINGSBURG A SECTION OF A
FREIGHT TRAIN WAS DERAILED WHEN A PART OF THE MAIN
NORTH-SOUTHLINE WAS WASHED AWAY. LAINGSBURG WAS ALSO
AFFECTED BY THE OVERFLOWING BUFFELS RIVER WHICH IN-
UNDATED MANY HOUSES, CUT POWERE, AND TELEPHONE LINES
WERE DAMAGED. THE NATIONAL ROAD SOUTH OF THE TOWN
WAS CLOSED, TOO.

9. FLOODINGS WERE ALSO REPORTED IN KOFFIEFONTEIN,
IN THE ORANGE FREE STATE; AND IN SIBASA, THE VENDA-
LANDS CAPITAL IN THE NORTHERN TRANSVAAL, CARS WERE
WASHED OFF BRIDGES WHICH WERE FLOODED BY THE SHINGWEDSI
AND LEVUBU RIVERS. NEAR BULVER IN NATAL THE FLOODED
UMKOMAAS RIVER CLAIMED SEVERAL PEOPLE, BELIEVED TO HAVE
DROWNED.

10. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS THE SOUTH AFRICAN
GOVERNMENT IS PREPARING ITSELF FOR EMERGENCY MEASURES
TO AID VICTIMS OF THE STORM AND FLOODS.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE HAS ANNOUNCED THAT
AS SOON AS THE EXTENT OF THE LOSSES OF THE FARMERS
WAS KNOWN THE CABINET WOULD CONSIDER EMERGENCY MEASURES
(NOT STATED). HE ALSO INTENDED VISITING THE AREAS
AFFECTED FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE FARMERS. THE MINISTER
FURTHER POINTED OUT THAT THE PRINCIPLE OF STATE AID
TO STRICKEN FARMERS HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO ENABLE THEM TO
RESUME PRODUCTION AND NOT TO REIMBURSE THE FARMER FOR
LOSS OF CROPS.

11. AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE JUST RETURNED FROM SEVERAL
FIELD TRIPS IN THE NORTH, SOUTHWESTERN, NORTHEASTERN,
AND NORTHWESTERN TRANSVAAL WHERE HE VISITED WITH FARMERS,
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GOVERNMENT AND OTHER OFFICIALS. FROM LICHTENBURG, IN
SOUTHWESTERN TRANSVAAL, HE FLEW LOW OVER THE FLOOD
AFFECTED CORN GROWING AREAS OF DELAREYVILLE, SCHWEIZER-
RENECKE TOWARDS BLOEMHOF (SEE PARAGRAPH 4 ABOVE FOR
DETAILS OF AREA OVERFLOWN). TWO WEEKS AFTER THE
TORRENTIAL RAINS BATTERED THE TOWN OF DELAREYVILLE,
A CENTER OF A VERY GOOD CORN FARMING AREA AND A BRANCH
CORN COOPERATIVE, IT IS STILL PARTLY UNDERWATER.
PARTICULARLY THE RAILROAD STATION WITH A LOADED TRAIN
AND RAILROAD TRACKS AND MAIN HARDTOP FEEDING ROADS ARE
UNDER TWO METERS OF WATER. THE TOWN OF SCHWEIZER-
RENECKE FURTHER SOUTH AND BLOEMHOF CLOSE TO THE
VAAL RIVER WERE SURROUNDED BY FLOOD WATERS AND THE
OVER FLOWING DAM NEAR BLOEMHOF.

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ACTION AGR-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 AF-06

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R 101414Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3787
INFO AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
CONGEN CAPE TOWN 7175
CONGEN DURBAN 3629
ACONGEN JOHANNESBURG 543*

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IT IS ESTIMATED THAT AN OVERALL AREA OF ABOUT 150 MILES LONG AND APPROXIMATELY 80 MILES WIDE IS, TO A LARGE EXTENT, STILL UNDER WATER. THAT IS ABOUT 45 PER CENT OF THE PLANTED CORN FIELDS IS FLOODED AND ABOUT 30 PER CENT OF THE OTHER FIELDS UNDER CULTIVATION ARE INACCESSIBLE AT THE PRESENT TO FARM MACHINERY. THE TYPICAL YELLOW COLOR OF FLOODED CORN FIELDS WIDESPREAD THROUGHOUT THE AREA INDICATES LITTLE LIKELIHOOD FOR RECOVERY, SHOULD THE RAINS SUBSIDE.

12. COMMENTS
UNUSUALLY HEAVY RAINS AND THE CYCLONE DANAE HAVE INDEED BATTERED A WIDESPREAD AREA OF TRANSVAAL, NATAL AND ORANGE FREE STATE PROVINCES. RAINS HAVE NOT YET SUBSIDED AND DAILY REPORTS REFER TO OVERFLOWING RIVERS, DAMS AND MORE RAINS AND FLOODS TO CONTINUE. BASED ON PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONTACTS WITH FARMERS. AGRICULTURAL TRADE AND OFFICIAL SOURCES IN THE AFFECTED AREAS, THE AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE BELIEVES THAT MUCH OF THIS DISASTER, EXCEPT FOR THE SOUTHWESTERN LICHTENBURG DISTRICT, HAS NOT SERIOUSLY AFFECTED THE OVERALL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCING AREAS. THIS BEING THE USUAL
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RAINY SEASON IN SOUTH AFRICA, FARMERS, TO A LARGE EXTENT, EXPECTED RAINS IN THE MAIN CORN AND GRAIN SORGHUM AREAS AND WERE READY FOR IT. WHILE THEY DID NOT EXPECT EXCESSIVE RAINS IN THIS PROPORTIONS, MANY HAVE PLANTED SLIGHTLY LARGER ACREAGE UNDER CORN AND GRAIN SORGHUM, AS IN THE PREVIOUS SEASON. THE OFFICIAL SOUTH AFRICAN CORN AND GRAIN SORGHUM ESTIMATES FOR 1975-76 CROP AND AREA PLANTED ARE NOT YET AVAILABLE. THEY ARE EXPECTED SOMETIME DURING THE MIDDLE OF MARCH. AS OF THIS WRITING, AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE ESTIMATES SOUTH AFRICAN CORN CROP AT 8.75 MILLION METRIC TONS AND THERE IS NO REASON, AT THIS TIME, TO CHANGE AG-RICULTURAL ATTACHE'S FIRST ESTIMATE OF GRAIN SORGHUM PRODUCTION SET AT 600,000 METRIC TONS FOR THIS SEASON.

13. ACTION REQUIRED: FOR KAY O. PATTERSON, EDITOR, USDA/FAS. AGRICULTURE ATTACHE TOOK SEVERAL COLOR PICTURES SHOWING ARIAL VIEWS OF THE FLOODED AREAS. (SEE PARAGRAPH 4). PICTURES SHOW DELAREYVILLE AND SCHWEIZER-RENECKE PARTLY UNDER WATER AS WELL AS FARMLANDS IN THIS AREA COVERED WITH LAKES AND WATER AFTER THE HEAVY RAINS. SHOULD YOU REQUIRE THESE FOR A REPORT IN THE FOREIGN AGRICULTURE MAGAZINE. PLEASE FASTO ASAP.
BOWDLER

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